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CREATING A NEW *TERRITOIRE IMAGINAIRE:* Identity of Displacement in the Works of Two Migrant Québécois Women Writers

by

Katarina Relja

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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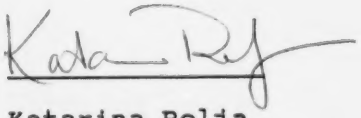

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Creating a New *territoire imaginaire*: Identity of Displacement in the Works of Two Migrant Québécois Women Writers** submitted by Katarina Relja in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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July 14, 1995

Abstract

This thesis examines two literary works, *Entre les fleuves* and *Le Double Conte de l'exil* by Nadine Ltaif and Mona Latif Ghattas, two women of Middle Eastern heritage who have adopted Quebec as their new homeland. Their works are analyzed in light of Robert Berrouët-Oriol and Robert Fournier's concept of transculturation, Julia Kristeva's theory of alterity, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "minor literature," with the aim of revealing the manner in which Ltaif and Latif Ghattas articulate the experience of linguistic and cultural exile and immigration.

When individuals come unstuck from their native land they are called migrants. When the nations do the same thing (Bangladesh), the act is called secession. What is the best thing about migrant peoples and seceeded nations? I think it is their hopefulness. Look into the eyes of such folk in old photographs. Hope blazes dimmed through the fading sepia tints. And what's the worst thing? It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containing a few meaning-drained momentoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from time.

- Salman Rushdie, *Shame*

My *destierro* (uprootedness) taught me to be an observer, to be an outsider, to have a double vision, to sleep with my eyes open, and to see with my eyes closed. And never to feel at home anywhere except for brief moments.

- Myrtha Chabrán, "Exiles,"

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Introduction

> Canada is 'colonized' in a specifically cultural and linguistic sense: the Canadian or Québécois writer has no other language than that of the perceived colonizer whether English or French. No refugee is to be found outside the linguistic territory of the metropolis; no political gesture can be defiantly made by recourse to minority languages and no common tribal or precolonial past can be conjured up as a challenge in the effort to establish a national/cultural identity.
>
> - Sylvia Söderlind, *Margin/Alias*

In a post-colonial era marked by cultural quests for self-definition and subsequent assertion of identity it has been argued that Canada occupies at once a position of ambivalence and privilege. While in countries such as India and the former European colonies of Africa the main struggle of the indigenous people has been to <u>reconstruct</u> their culture and identity, Canada's newcomers have been facing a battle of <u>construction</u> of their culture, the establishment of an identity in the new geographical context. In "settler colonies," such as New Zealand, Australia and Canada, the

white European immigrant population "faced problems of establishing their 'indigenity' and distinguishing it from their continuing sense of their European inheritance" (Ashcroft et al., 135). This process has been further tempered by the already existing indigenous population concerned with their own identity and its assertion. As Söderlind explains, "Canada's past is...a double one: it has been colonized by the French and British but it is also a colonizer of its indigenous people" (3). The fact that two imperial powers, French and British, partook in the shaping of Canada has further complicated the issue of identity and rendered Canada's position quite unique. Currently, Canada prides itself on its status as a bilingual nation, a country of two distinct cultures and languages as defined in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*. However, the co-existence of two "settler colonies" has been far from amicable as indicated by Quebec's continuous struggle for sovereignty and independence. Culturally and linguistically, in a North American context, Quebec is perceived as an island of French surrounded by its "English" neighbours. The practice of French language and culture is limited within the frontiers of Quebec, with numerous exceptions stemming from francophone communities existing outside the province. As indicated by the introduction of Bill 101 in the 1970's, within Quebec itself, the protection of the status of French as the <u>major</u> language of the province has

become an ongoing concern.[1] It is against the threat, the losing of French language and its culture, and a self-perception as a "minoritized" (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 367) nation that the Québécois have constructed their identity.[2] As Harvey contends, the Québécois have adopted a different manner in which to define themselves than have the English Canadians:

> Alors que le Canada anglais arrive difficilement à se donner une identité cohérente qui soit autre que géographique et plus récemment, multiculturelle, la société canadienne-française traditionelle et le Québec moderne ont toujours véhiculé des projets de société et ont dévéloppé un sens plus poussé de leur identité collective, sans qu'il y ait pour autant unanimité sur le contenu de cette identité. (226)

However, as Verthuy and Lequin argue, it is time for Quebec to re-evaluate and revise its frame of reference when constructing its identity. Québécois culture is in the midst

---

[1] For a historical overview of the political implications of the language situation in Quebec see Marc V. Levine, "Language Policy and Quebec's *visage français*: New Directions in *la question linguistique*," *Québec Studies* 8 (1989): 1-16.

[2] However, as Morin and Bertrand argue in their investigation, the "minoritized" position allocated to Quebec by some, defined as a state's resistance to the majority, "ce stade où une société devient responsable d'elle-même" (157), does not consider the entire scope of the society's state structure, i.e. economic, political, esthetic, moral, religious activities. For these critics it is rather Quebec's economic, political, cultural and religious dependence on exterior territories and other countries that characterizes the province more accuretly.

of transformation owing largely to the influx of immigrants to Quebec, a situation encompassing the whole of Canada but with less complex ramifications. The contemporary (im)migrant and settler in Quebec is more likely to be a member of a nation other than European. As such, the traditional view of Quebec's identity "portant essentiellement tant sur une homogénéité biologique et linguistique toute fictive chez ses ancêtres que sur sa mission 'divine', c'est à dire la nécessité en terre hostile de maintenir la religion catholique par le biais de la langue française ainsi que le souvenir d'une certaine culture française pré-révolutionaire" (Verthuy and Lequin 52) can no longer be sustained. Furthermore, culturally and especially linguistically, Quebec must come to terms with the omnipresent, unavoidable English (United States and the rest of Canada) influence which has so far participated in the construction of the Québécois identity.[3] Bertrand explains:

> La langue française au Québec ne va pas de soi. [...] la langue québécoise est une autre langue dans la langue française. Contaminée par l'anglaise en ses structures profondes, baignant dans un environnement socio-culturel anglophone, elle est constituée elle-même par un mélange de niveaux de langue, dont le spectre s'étend du français le plus châtié et académique, en passant par les parlers

---

[3] The recent documentary *The Rise and Fall of English Quebec* traces this economic, political and cultural influence of the English presence in Quebec.

campagnards, le 'joual'...jusqu'à l'aphasie. (50)

Therefore, in its struggle for self-definition, Quebec must now take into consideration the diversity of languages, religions and cultures that presently influence and compose the Québécois identity.

Due to Quebec's quest for self-definition, the recent wave of immigration has had a different impact on the province than on the rest of Canada. In Quebec's case this migratory flux is inscribed in a double process, illustrated by Berrouët-Oriol and Fournier as "la forte affirmation d'une identité nationale, francophone, édifiée pierre à pierre et l'émergence d'un tissu urbain transculturel qui interpelle, subvertit et contribue à l'éclatement d'une mono-identité nationale-francophone" (9). It is a struggle between "temporal lineality" that values ancestry and the "pure" and "spatial plurality" that values the composite, the hybrid (Ashcroft et al., 35). Whereas the earlier immigrants were "occultés dans l'ensemble, absorbés dans la population québécoise majoritaire," the contemporary newcomer, inevitably a party to the politics of multiculturalism, "ne s'assimile plus, il ou elle s'intègre certes, mais avec sa différence; on peut chercher à maintenir sa culture d'origine dans son pays d'accueil" (Verthuy et Lequin 53-54). The contemporary Quebec immigrant may retain more than one passport and nationality. New grounds of definition must, therefore, be established in order to revise the monolithic notion of identity and replace

it with an emerging plural or hybrid one.

The diversity of the Québécois social fabric is, of course, reflected in the literary scene which embraces writers from different cultural backgrounds. These hyphenated "Québécois" writers occupy a place in the contemporary Québécois literary production, albeit a marginal one.[4] However, as argued by Verthuy and Lequin, the category of marginal allotted to these writers must not become fixed since "le maintenir serait accepter que se perpétue cette vision traditionelle et dépassée du Québec selon laquelle le centre composé de 'francophones de souches' est un et indivis" (Qtd. in Lequin, 1992, 33). This is far from saying that European cultures have ceased to have an impact on the Quebec cultural and literary scene, but rather, as further suggested by Lequin, there is a need to "reconnaître l'apport de ces créatrices [...] à la culture québécoise, d'accueillir leurs oeuvres et de les faire circuler" (1992, 33). Moreover, it is important to recognize the new levels of diversity introduced by (im)migrant[5] writing in Quebec and to resist the types of

---

[4] In his article titled "L'effet d'exil" Berrouët-Oriol critiques the Québécois literary institution's quasi-silent reception of Jean Jonassaint's recent and pivotal publication, *Le pouvoir des mots, les maux du pouvoir* (1986), that deals with the relationship between migrant litterature and the Québécois literary production.

[5] As Lequin explains, the usage of the term migrant is much more appropriate than immigrant since the former, less reductive, "participe du va-et-vient entre deux lieux, du concept de re(dé)territorialisation, d'une certaine dérive" (1992, 31). For Nepveu, on the other hand, the term immigrant has socio-cultural connotations whereas migrant refers to an

categorizations that blur distinctions of nationality, race and gender.

It is in this socio-cultural context that I have chosen to study the works of Nadine Ltaif and Mona Latif Ghattas. As recent non-European immigrants to Quebec, the two writers are prime examples of the current plural composition of the Québécois literary scene. Besides being doubly marginalized due to their gender and culture, the two writers occupy a specific and unique linguistic position. Having emigrated from former French colonies in the Middle East (Lebanon and Egypt), Ltaif and Latif Ghattas were not strangers to the French language. Paradoxically, by immigrating to the French enclave of Canada, they have replicated the linguistic and cultural duality of their points of origin. Although they write in French, their focus is trained on Middle Eastern cultures. In their first homes, French represented what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would term as a "paper language" (1986, 16) that is, a language associated with an educated elite, hence not the common medium of communication. In Quebec, their relationship to French is reversed because French is no longer an artificial and restricted mode of exchange. Rather, it is used on all levels of communication with exceptional and occasional interferences from the other official language of the country, i.e. English.

---

esthetic practice (1988, 199).

In this study, I shall focus my anlysis on two semi-autobiographical works, *Entre les fleuves* and *Le Double Conte de l'exil*, by Ltaif and Latif Ghattas, which explore the experiences of migration and transculturation. My study, however, is not intended to posit a new mould into which all migrant women are to be cast nor to erase their diversities and distinctions. Rather, it is focused on the specific manifestations of the experience of (im)migration in the two women writer's literary productions, "comment elles perçoivent l'exilé/e, comment elles expriment l'expérience de la traversée des frontières et comment l'écriture devient, pour certaines, acte de transmutation et création d'une nouvelle appartenance, d'un nouveau territoire" (Lequin 1992, 31). Through their texts, Ltaif and Latif Ghattas illustrate their position as "other" within the Québécois society. Yet, because of their familiarity with French, they are able to explore new sites for the articulation of their highly complex identities. This process also opens up possibilities for an(other) vision of Quebec.

Chapter One

> The stakes are high: who is a "Canadian" subject. What cultural forms and languages will legitimate this subject's identity? Whose fictions will "make up" the face of the country? Whose looks function as the visible face of the country, its symbolic figuration? Which categories, classify principles, will be used to order it?
>
> - Barbara Godard, "Access, Responsability"

This chapter explores those methodologies in which I have found a useful frame of reference for my analysis of the works of Nadine Ltaif and Mona Latif Ghattas. Beginning with the more culturally and socially specific, I will first examine the concept of transculturation, as put forth by Berrouët-Oriol and Fournier. These cultural critics' work, grounded in an overview of social policies which have determined the nature of cross and inter-linguistic and cultural interactions in Quebec and Canada, proposes the notion of transculturation as a more viable manner to explore the dynamism of a cultural exchange than what was put forth by the policy of

multiculturalism.

In order to situate the larger questions of identity that emerge in a multi-ethnic society, I will then turn to Julia Kristeva's theories of subjectivity. Although Kristeva's analysis of the place of alterity in the formation of human subjectivity cannot be unproblematically applied to the work of (im)migrant writers in Quebec, it does offer an alternative to discourses of identity politics. Like Kristeva's notion of a permanently ruptured subjectivity which problematizes the binary of self and other, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "minor literature" provides me with the possibility of envisioning the identity of the migrant and his/her oeuvre along the patterns of dynamic interaction.

Before proceeding to my presentation and analysis of these methodological issues, I should point out that I do not wish to overlook the radical differences between these models. Given the scope of this study, however, I can only provide a broad context for the work of the specific critics on whose models and concepts I shall be drawing. My aim in providing this overview is not to posit false affinities, but rather to find those aspects of the critics' works that offer me better tools of analysis.

One manner in which to regard the emerging Québécois/Canadian identity is to begin by re-evaluating the primary Canadian cultural determinant, that is the policy of multiculturalism. Since its implementation in 1971, the policy

has been subject to debate by many groups, including ethnocultural minorities that the policy seeks and claims to protect.[6] The main problem seems to stem from the fact that pragmatically the policy does not comply with its objectives. This is due, at least in part, to certain universalist and Eurocentric tendencies in the policy's ideology.

Viewed positively, however, multiculturalism as a federal policy, an ideology and a social reality "provides a set of social values which recognizes both the expressive identity needs and the instrumental power needs of members of diverse ethnic collectives, and, at the same time, can provide the basis for a new kind of universalism which legitimizes the inclusion of different ethnic units in the general structure of society" (Kallen 52). Ideally, multiculturalism would lead to a development of a "multinational society within a common political (federal) administrative framework" (Kallen 53). Yet, to echo Kallen's argument, is universalism possible in a postmodern culture that is marked by fragmentation? And, on the political level, can equivalence be guaranteed in the distribution of power? If so, pragmatically, how can a multinational society operate within a multilingual framework?

---

[6] For further political, social and cultural critiques of the multicultural policy see: Koglia Moodley, "Canadian Multiculturalism as Ideology," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6 (1983): 320-331; Caterina Pizanias, "Centering on Changing Communities: Multiculturalism as Meaning and Message," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 24.3 (1992): 87-98.

According to Berrouët-Oriol and Fournier, multiculturalism is no longer theoretically nor pragmatically viable in the contemporary Canadian reality. Although the policy promotes and valorizes cultural traditions of ethnic groups, it does so only by integrating the latter in the so-called Canadian duality "en vue de renforcer les assises des 'deux peuples fondateurs' et de contribuer, ainsi, à l'unité de la Confédération" (Berrouët-Oriol and Fournier 9). The *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* states that "steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada" (I xxi, qtd. in Dimić, 5). Furthermore, the fourth objective of the policy of multiculturalism insists that "[t]he Government will continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (Qtd. in Kallen, 54).[7] It becomes clear that in its initial conceptualization, the myth of the Canadian mosaic -- "one nation/many people/many cultures" -- was flawed. Not only did it relegate cultural pluralism to the sphere of festivals and ethno-cultural events, but it also posited *a priori* that being

---

[7] See 3 (i) and 3 (j) of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, R.S.C. 1985, Chap. 24 (4th Supp.), as quoted in Linda Hutcheon, ed., *Other Solitudes* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990) 369-374.

"Canadian" entails conforming to the British and/or French linguistic, cultural and political monolith.

The indigenous population of Canada has also been a firm adversary of the multiculturalism policy. According to the Canadian "natives," the concept of multiculturalism, on a pragmatic level, substitutes their status as "les hommes qui sont originaires d'un pays qui a 'toujours' été habité par leurs ancêtres" (Plumet 24) with that of an ethno-cultural minority within Canada. Because the history of colonialism is still palpable in the lives of the natives whose very identity and modes of existence were radically changed by it, even in a post-colonial era, the "two founding nations" theory cannot be upheld.

For reasons similar to those put forth by the indigenous population, the Québécois have also been opposed to multiculturalism. They view the policy as a threat to bilingualism, hence to the status of French language and culture within Quebec and Canada. In his study of multiculturalism in a Québécois context, Kwaterko locates Quebec's problematic situation as owing largely to the population's firm allegiance to its "pérennité historique" (1) which the Canadian policy makers have symbolically overlooked. Kwaterko outlines the double nature of Quebec's position regarding its relation to/with the ethno-cultural minorities:

> [...] étant donné le "déclin' démographique au Québec [...] et la "cosmopolitisation" des cultures occidentales, comment encourager les immigrants à se retacher à la collectivité québécoise sans pour autant laminer ou nier leurs cultures spécifiques [puisque] la préservation de l'intégrité culturelle de l'immigrant allophone apparaît souvent comme facteur menaçant la promotion de la spécifité linguistique et culturelle du Québec. (1)

Be it perceived as an inevitable reality or a threat, ethno-cultural minorities in Quebec cannot be overlooked. According to some, the solution lies in adopting a regional, Québécois version of multiculturalism[8] that will have "le fait français" (Harvey 227) as its basis. Embracing such a perspective, Quebec would seek, on a national and international level, to "élargir les paramètres de son identité collective pour y intégrer des éléments étrangers tout en maintenant l'affirmation de son vouloir-vivre collectif face aux forces d'attraction très puissantes de l'anglophonie nord-américaine" (Harvey 227).

The underlying charges against multiculturalism, regardless of their point of origin, seem to return to the question of the nature of cultural exchange. For instance,

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[8] Such a vision was presented in March of 1981 in an action plan titled *Autant de façons d'être québécois*. For a summary of this plan see Fernand Harvey, "L'ouverture du Québec au multiculturalisme (1900-1981)," *Études canadiennes/Canadian Studies* 21.2 (1986): 227.

there is concern that integration implies a unilateral exchange between two cultures culminating in an ethno-cultural minority's linguistic and cultural subservience to the majority population.[9] This notion of cultural interaction, i.e. the inevitable domination of the majority, has led to a view of multiculturalism as a Eurocentric. This does not take into account the dynamic nature of any exchange. When two cultures come into contact, be they white Europeans and an indigenous population or recent immigrants and white Europeans, they partake in a double movement of influence and exchange where all the parties involved are ultimately left somewhat modified. Hence, it is no longer a question of a society based upon "the two founding nations," but rather the establishment of a new reality shaped and influenced by various cultures and nations.

It is this absence of a viable model of intercultural exchange that has led Berrouët-Oriol and Fournier to adopt the concept of *transculturation*, a concept first proposed in 1940 by the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz, which the former maintain as a more accurate description of the Canadian and Québécois reality:

> Nous entendons que le vocable "transculturation" exprime mieux *les différentes phases du processus de transition d'une culture à l'autre,* car celui-ci

---

[9] See Michel Pagé, "Three Conceptions of Integration in a Canadian Pluri-Ethnic Society," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 24.3 (1992): 35-50.

> ne consiste pas seulement à acquérir une culture distincte - ce qui est en toute rigueur ce qu'exprime le mot anglo-américain d'"acculturation" -, mais que *le processus implique aussi nécessairement la perte ou le déracinement d'une culture antérieure* - ce qu'on pourrait appeler "déculturation," et en outre, signifie la création consécutive de nouveaux phénomènes culturels que l'on pourrait dénommer "néo-culturation." (my emphasis. Ortiz, qtd. in Lamore, 19)

Transculturation may therefore be regarded as

> un ensemble de <u>transmutations constantes</u>; elle [la transculturation] est créatrice et jamais achevée; elle est irréversible. Elle est un processus dans lequel on donne quelque chose en échange de ce qu'on reçoit: *les deux parties de l'équation s'en trouvent modifiées*. Il en emerge une réalité nouvelle, qui n'est pas une mosaique de caractères, mais un phénomène nouveau, original et indépendant. (my emphasis, Lamore 19)

Essentially, the process of transculturation[10] as outlined by Ortiz, questions the very notions of

---

[10] It is important to note that the concept of transculturation bears several meanings or interpretations. As Lamore points out, several authors use the term to signify "un processus qui aboutit à l'assimilation complète d'une culture par une autre" (19). This, however, is not so in Ortiz's case where reciprocity rather than assimilation marks a cultural exchange.

integration/assimilation, concepts that are inherent in the policy of multiculturalism but whose actual workings and consequences are never fully examined in the policy. Furthermore, transculturation also gives a new insight into establishing an identity by viewing it not as an ontological variant but rather as a process that is shaped and determined by the surrounding conditions. In other words, the fragmented and de-centered nature of identity, which the concept of transculturation puts forth, requires a radical shift in our understanding of the notion of identity. It is not defined by the traditional terms of language, territory and a mythic past but rather by its ability to "passer à travers, parcourir, voyager, devenir sans qu'il y ait de terme assignable" (Nepveu 1989, 19). Lastly, according to Kwaterko, the principle of transculturation, while calling for a dialogue of cultures, challenges the relationship between major and minor -- the "us"/"them" dialectic -- that multiculturalism inadvertently maintains. In the transcultural model, it is imperative for Canada and/or Quebec to "renonce[r] à son statut de majoritaire, qu'il remette en question son identité -- pour devenir 'un autre parmi d'autres'" (Kwaterko 2). In other words, the "Canadian" and/or "Québécois" subject must recognize that in relation to the ethno-cultural subject, s/he is also perceived as "other."

In her psychoanalytic inquiry, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva further expands on this notion of "otherness" by

making a call for everyone to recognize his/her own strangeness or foreignness:

> Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks an abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem, perhaps make it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. (1)

Through Freud's conceptualization of the uncanny, *unheimlich* - "that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud, qtd. in Kristeva, 183) - Kristeva formulates her theory of the foreigner within us. In other words, the foreigner, the other, located in one's own unconscious, is that which has been alienated from the mind through the process of repression but also that which recurs and disrupts the symbolic order.[11] Furthermore, Kristeva argues that this disruption leads toward a "depersonalization"

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[11] "Let us say that the psychic apparatus represses representative processes and contents that are no longer necessary for pleasure, self-preservation, and the adaptive growth of the speaking subject and the living organism. Under certain conditions, however, the repressed 'that ought to have remained secret' shows up again and produces a feeling of uncanny strangeness" (Kristeva 184).

or "*destruction of the self*" which would then lead to an "*opening* toward the new" (188) - a concomitant identification and a fear of the "other" experienced in the self. By confronting one's own strangeness through the destabilization of the self, the foreigner, or the newcomer, is no longer viewed as a threat to one's identity but as a being who shares a common unconscious base - the uncanny strangeness that is always already part of the formation of subjectivity. In the end, as Kristeva contends, "solidarity is founded on the consciousness of the unconscious - desiring, destructive, fearful, empty, impossible" (192). Yet, Kristeva is cautious not to fix the other in a permanent structure for fear of reverting into the dialectics of "self and other." Instead, like Ortiz, she opts for a politics of non-closure, for "sketching out [otherness's] perpetual motion through some of its variegated aspects [...] without goal, without boundary, without end" (3).

The open-endedness of the process Kristeva describes in *Strangers to Ourselves* stems from her concept of *sujet-en-procès*. Playing upon the double meaning of the word *procès*, as at once signifying process and trial, Kristeva outlines subjectivity as being "alive only if it is never the same" (Qtd. in McCance 25). As such, the "subject recognizes itself as double, as made up of an other-self, and as subject of a discourse which arises from another discourse" and not as a "monological subject [...] who sees itself as one, a conscious

unity, [...] a master of its own discourse" (McCance 25-26).

The double nature of the Kristevan *sujet-en-procès* is linked to what she terms as the semiotic, a "pre- or translinguistic modality of psyche inscription" (McCance 28). According to her, it is the dynamism between the semiotic and the symbolic (representation, meaning, sign) that produces language as a social practice. Hence, "the subject in language exists in a permanent state of division between the semiotic and symbolic, a division which univocal rational discourse attempts to hide" (McCance 28-29). Occupying this duality the subject becomes an "unfinished product, [...] placed on trial by its own otherness, a subject which posits its thesis as undecidable process between semiotic and symbolic" (McCance 29).

The ever-shifting patterns of Kristeva's notion of *sujet-en-procès* corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *experimentation*. In their "anti-philosophical," "anti-critical" study of Kafka's work[12] as a "minor literature," they outline and undertake the process of *experimentation*, as both the subject and the method of analysis. This process involves an "active dismantling" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 48) of former systems of critical practice and representation and replacing them by a practice that operates in a "virtuality," escaping closure as imposed by previous systems

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[12]Work implies all of Kafka's fiction, correspondence and diaries.

of analysis:

> One's goal is to transform what is still only a *method (procédé)* in the social field into a *procedure* as an infinite virtual movement that at the extreme invokes the machinic assemblage of the *trial (procès)* as a reality that is on its way and already there. The whole of this operation is to be called a Process, one that is precisely interminable (1986, 48).[13]

Like Kristeva, Deleuze and Guattari challenge the existing systems of representation. Where the latter focus upon current models of critical analysis (literary, philosophical, etc.) as their primary systems of representation, Kristeva turns her attention to language. However, it is important to note that Kristeva's theories are and have been applied on a textual/literary level. The subject-on/in-trial/making constitutes the core of Kristeva's

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[13] Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *experimentation* follows their perception of a text/work as a rhizome:

> À l'opposé d'une structure qui se définit par un ensemble de points et de positions, de rapports binaires entre ces points et de relations biunivoques entre ces positions, le rhizome n'est fait que de lignes: lignes de segmentarité, de stratification, comme dimensions, mais aussi ligne de fuite ou de déterritorialisation comme dimension maximale d'après laquelle, en la suivant, la multiplicité se métamorphose en changeant de nature...le rhizome est un système acentré, non hiérarchique et non signifiant, sans Général, sans mémoire organisatrice ou automate central, uniquement défini par une circulation d'états. (1976, 61-62)

model, whereas in Deleuze and Guattari's model it is the "text-as-literature" which occupies this space. And, it is within this text that "revolutionary" forces lie and are able to subvert the typical systems of representation and analysis. It is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari refuse to classify their new type of analysis as a "theory" or a "philosophy," thereby stressing the central importance of "process" to their approach.

Since, in Deleuze and Guattari's case, the tools of analysis are literary texts, their mode of inquiry becomes even more useful in the study of migrant literatures. In the outline of their "anti-theory" of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari make clear their specific use of the term "minor". For them, "minor" is not caught up in an oppositional relationship to "major" literature, nor does it refer to specific literatures, but rather it designates "the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (1986, 18).[14] Furthermore, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "[a] minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (1986, 16). The three characteristics of minor

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[14] It is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of minority discourse does not follow its typical notion, defined by Abdul R. JanMohammed and David Lloyd as "the product of damage, of damage more or less systematically inflicted on cultures produced as minorities by the dominant culture" (5).

literature are identified by them as follows:

> ...the first characteristic of minor literature...is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization... The second characteristic of minor literature is that everything in them is political... The third characteristic...is that in it everything takes on a collective value. (1986, 16-17)

It is against this outline of minor literature that Deleuze and Guattari study Kafka's work. In their view Kafka's work fulfils the first characteristic of minor literature, the "deterritorializatiing" of language. At the time when Kafka was writing, German was considered the "paper language" of Czechoslovakia. According to Deleuze and Guattari, choosing to write in "the German language of Prague as it is and in its very poverty" (1986, 19) constitutes an act of subversion on Kafka's part. As a result, Kafka, due to his own polycultural and polylinguistic situation, was able "to tear a minor literature away from its own language [German], allowing it to challenge the language and making it follow a sober revolutionary path" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 19).[15]

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[15] Critics such as Stanley Corngold in "Kafka and the Dialect of Minor Literature" have taken issue with Deleuze and Guattari's views on Kafka's identity. Corngold, among others, do not see Kafka's writing in German as constituting a position of minority. I would like to at once acknowledge these critiques, which pertain to Kafka studies, and return to Deleuze and Guattari's notions of "minor literature" that I see as a useful category of analysis beyond the specific case of Kafka.

In Deleuze and Guattari's view, this deterritorialization of language does not remain static. On the contrary it leads to a momentary reterritorialization. However, now, the newly constructed language must be analyzed on the level of syntax, images and metaphors. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka was able to tear language from its sense by "open[ing] the word onto unexpected internal intensities" (1986, 22). As such, the meaning is once again deterritorialized and "[*l*]*anguage stops being representative in order to now move toward its extremities*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 23). In order for a language to "move toward its extremities," it must "take flight along creative lines of escape" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 26) where metaphors and images are not embedded in the typical systems of representation and interpretation but, constantly caught up in the act of "becoming" or "perpetual postponement," (1986, 44) are perceived as "intensities in the field of imminence," "desires," entities lacking definition.

The three modes of analysis I have explored in this chapter - cultural, psychological and literary respectively - share a fundamental assumption that cultural encounter and exchange are to be viewed as dynamic processes: Ortiz's transculturation is a "processus séculaire, constant, permenant" (Lamore 18), while Kristeva's internalized alterity is described as a "perpetual motion." In turn, Deleuze and Guattari see the emergence of the conditions of minority along

an interminable chain of processes. Another similarity between the three modes is their belief in the coexistence between unity and separation. In the cultural and literary modes of analysis separation may be viewed in terms of the different states of "transmutation." The concepts of acculturation, deculturation and neo-culturation, as described by Ortiz, mirror Deleuze and Guattari's notions of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Unity is thus perceived as a simultaneous inter-weaving of all three states. In Kristeva's model unity is accomplished through a moral imperative - a personal "recognition" of one's own foreignness reflected onto a universal plane. Finally, it is important to note that all three models resist stasis and rigid categorization. Whereas the concept of transculturation is basically an outline of the process of cultural transference, Deleuze and Guattari stress the significance of "*how it* [the text] *functions*" (1986, 45) in an ever-shifting oscillation between the poles of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In a similar manner Kristeva's subject constructs its identity by asking "*Where* am I?" rather than "*Who* am I?" since, in Tostevin's words, "the space with which the outcast, the excluded is preoccupied, is never *one*; it is neither *homogeneous* nor *totalisable*, but essentially divisible, pliable, catastrophic" (Qtd. in McCance, 29). It is in this double movement of giving and receiving, constantly undermining a monolithic and fully centred identity, that

migrant and hybrid literatures are emerging.

Chapter Two

> i. me. you. the other.
> one word emotionally multiplied.
> - Smaro Kamboureli, *in the second person*

To enter Nadine Ltaif's world of *Entre les fleuves* is to enter the space of psychic alienation, of self-(re)discovery imposed by an individual's adjustment to a new land, a new cultural space. Born in Egypt in 1961, Ltaif along with her family immigrated to Lebanon where she completed most of her early schooling. Later she relocated to Montreal alone where she entered the University of Montreal. Her studies concentrated on French and cinema which eventually earned her a Master's degree in French studies. Besides *Entre les fleuves* she has published an earlier book of poetry, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ishtar* (1987), and an art book titled *Vestige d'un jardin* (1193). Her poems, short stories and articles have appeared in Québécois literary journals such as *Moebius, Estuaire, La Parole Métèque* and *Trois*, to name just a few. Throughout her diverse literary accomplishments, particularly the two poetic

novels mentioned above, it is Ltaif's semi-autobiographical exploration of exile which prevails. As an Arabic speaking Lebanese Quebec woman writer, Ltaif engages with the experience of immigration from a woman's perspective. As such, her work, as noted in the introduction of Verduyn's essay, is not only an "(im)migrant questioning" but also a "feminist critique" (99) of a cross-cultural experience where the act of writing and the question of language are perceived simultaneously as barriers to and openings onto the (re)construction of a (new) identity. It is under the sign of woman and plural subjectivity that Ltaif examines the concept and circumstances of exile not only as a division from self, but also as a separtion from the mother.

Ltaif's first published poetic work, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ishtar*, discloses the author's main concern with the difficulty of writing, a consequence of having switched from Arabic to French as the primary language of communication at all social levels. In the documentary *L'Arbre qui dort rêve à ses racines*,[16] a film composed of the testimonies of immigrants across several generations and in which Ltaif participates, the author herself admits to the challenge of writing her first book: "Le premier je n'avais vraiment pas de vocabulaire...J'avais très peu de vocabulaire. C'est vrai. Pourquoi? Parce que chaque livre rassemble des mots, un

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[16]Dir. Michka Sâal, NFB, 1992.

univers de mots." Each book is composed of words which the author does not yet possess, has not yet felt, nor fully accessed. As Harel notes in his essay on the linguistic consequences of an individual's migratory experience, "[c]hanger de langue serait alors changer de peau et les mots investis deviendraient autant de stigmates d'un perpétuel départ" (27). The semi-autobiographical narrator of *Les Métamorphoses d'Ishtar* further elaborates this problematic encounter with the language of the other:

> Car maintenant, d'où vais-je vous écrire, de quel lieu, de quel paysage? Montréal me vient sous les pas, et cet Hiver, et cette terre, que je ne connais pas, et ces arbres et ces parcs que je ne connais pas et je m'asseois sous un arbre au parc La Fontaine, et j'écoute ce que dit l'arbre du parc La Fontaine, et j'écoute les eaux du lac artificiel, et je change de langue, vous savez, mais je garde mes mots pour demeurer plus proche de *vous*, au moment où je brûle, au moment où ma langue est brûlée. (37)

> Ma Dame, vous me faites changer de langue, et ce que je disais en arabe je le dis maintenant en français. Qu'avez-vous fait de ma langue? Comment ai-je pu conserver ma voix? Au-delà de la mort, au-delà de la souffrance, vous avez une force! Comment a-t-on pu vous voiler un jour. (61)

Linguistically, for Ltaif's narrator, the "vous" marks the stage at which Arabic starts losing its function as the narrator's vehicular language and becomes the vernacular, the maternal, a language used less frequently.[17] French, on the other hand, is no longer considered the "paper language" but replaces Arabic as the vehicular, "a language of the first sort of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 23), or in other words, a language of the first sort of uprooting. In Ltaif's case this "first sort of deterritorialization" was already, at least partially, experienced while still residing in the Middle East where French was employed in the urban,

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[17] The ordering of language into its four *functional* categories -- vernacular, vehicular, referential, mythic -- is based on Henri Gobard's model of language whose components include the linguistic, sociological, historical, ethnic and cultural aspects of a society. His model is taken up by Deleuze and Guattari in the formulation of their concept of "minor literature." My main concern in this discussion, however, is the relationship between the vehicular and the vernacular functions of language which Gobard describes in the following passage:

> Cette langue de la maison est exactement ce que j'appelle la langue vernaculaire, langue du village, de la communauté, de l'ethnie, langue qui se parle avant de s'écrire, langue qui s'écoute et ne se lit pas, langue de l'hic et nunc reliée immédiatement à l'histoire, langue anticosmopolite, langue qui n'est pas faite pour communiquer mais pour communier, langue de naissance, de l'enfance, langue du jeu, du coeur et du courage, langue des contes qui s'oppose à la langue du compte, du quantitatif, à la langue véhiculaire, qui transporte l'information, langue écrite ou langue oralisée, mais toujours *graphocentrique* où le locateur parle comme un livre de comptes, langue cosmopolite, langue de la ville, langue des villes, langue interchangeable, administrative, bureaucratique, froide, langue apprise, langue de guerre, langue soumise au plus fort, langue des pouvoirs. (86)

bureaucratic and governmental settings of business and commercial exchange, confining the maternal language, Arabic, to the cultural sphere. The full deterritorializing impact of the vehicular language on the maternal is, however, fully realized in the new cultural sphere of Quebec where the latter's use is scarce. Moreover, during this last phase of linguistic transition, both the vehicular and the maternal languages are altered. As Ltaif's narrator reveals, her own voice is rendered so unrecognizable to herself that when she speaks she hears "une bouche obscure" (1987, 41) speaking to her. Hence, in the narrator's critical question, "Qu'avez vous fait de ma langue?", "ma langue" does not necessarily refer to Arabic per se, but to a language of transition, a language that has espoused Arabic since birth, French since grade school as the "paper language," bearing the remnants of colonial France, and now French as the vehicular language. But this Québécois French to which the narrator is now introduced itself was initially a product of transplantation and linguistic grafting onto a large "American" territory.[18]As a

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[18]Is it even possible to refer to French as the vehicular language of Québec in relation to the prominant status of English? As Deleuze and Guattari note, "the distribution of these languages [vehicular, vernacular, referential and mythic] varies from one group to the next [...] Moreover all these factors can have ambiguous edges, changing borders [...] One language can fill a certain function for one material and another function for another material. Each function of a language divides up in turn and carries with it multiple centers of power" (24). Furthermore, as Gobard quotes Bourdieu, "la position sociale du locateur" (87) must also be considered.

result, the narrator's current language is a hybrid entity that bears the influence of the maternal on the vehicular, that is, Arabic on French, and vice versa. In its oral manifestation, this language is not an unblemished French, to say nothing of Arabic, that the narrator now speaks, but a language marred by an accent, a noise, "le bruit incessant de 'la Déchirure' qui assomme et assourdit et tue" (1987, 58). A noise that not only disrupts and tears apart the narrator's maternal language, but one that has the same effect on Québécois French, effectively deterritorializing both of them. Like Ltaif, in her text *La Québécoite*, Robin describes this "noise" as "la parole immigrante," an immigrant's individual utterance that "déraille, déroute, détone, [...] perd la boule, le nord [...] perd ses mots" (85-86).

For a migrant writer, whose work is primarily concerned with the working of language, the experience of switching languages opens up many more issues. According to Harel, the main problem in such an experience is the linguistic heterogeneity that is always at play in the migrant subject's "constitution difficile de l'imaginaire social," (25) a necessary and inevitable undertaking fundamental in the psychical and bodily (re)constitution of his or her identity. Placing the problematic in psychoanalytic discourse, Harel attributes this problem to the experience of being banished from the mother tongue:

> Changer de langue impliquerait du même coup changer de corps et l'on peut penser que l'exil territorial -- abandon d'une terre matricielle -- est perçu comme la perte de signifiants premiers associés à la figure maternelle. (25)

In this context of corporeal and linguistic exile, the migrant writer gives birth to Kristeva's melancholic subject, "a dreamer making love with absence" (Kristeva 10). Physically, this absence is the homeland which she/he has left, "a vanished space," an "abandoned [...] period of time [...] a mirage of the past that he will never be able to recover" (Kristeva 10). Psychically, it is the space of the absent mother, the other, a (transcendental) discourse in the unconscious that constitutes and signifies the subject. In other words, the migrant subject's departure from the homeland mirrors the child's departure from the mother's womb. This parting consequently entails the birth of a new entity: as the child who is no longer umbilically bound to the body of the mother, the immigrant subject is no longer tied to the language and signifying systems of the homeland. This parallel is formulated by Kristeva in her psychoanalytic study of alterity where "the exile is a stranger to his mother" (5). However, it is important to note that, regardless of this rupture, the maternal, the language that spatiotemporally designates the "*here*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 23) guides every step of the way. "Je vous sens toujours là, / même si je

ne vous vois pas" (1987, 44) writes Ltaif's narrator of the mother tongue she has apparently left behind. It is clear that it, nevertheless, continuously contributes to the deterritorialization of the new language.

As a stranger to her/his homeland, her/his maternal language, her/his mother, the melancholic/exiled subject becomes, in Kristeva's terminology, a stranger to her/himself. The language and signifying systems of the homeland, the base of her/his identity that continuously supports and affirms it, are no longer prominent. In Ortiz's conception of transculturation this process may be viewed as "déculturation," described as "le processus [qui] implique aussi nécessairement la perte ou le déracinement d'une culture antérieure" (Qtd. in Lamore, 19). This "déculturation" fragments the migrant's identity and brings about a deterritorialization in the new socio-cultural context. Consequently, the migrant subject's identity is experienced and based on banishment or, in Harel's words, "l'expérience fantasmée de la perte" (Harel 25). Operating in the realm of negation, the melancholic subject simultaneously "se nourrit [...] d'absence" and seeks to give it a presence, an "incorporation douloureuse comme objet à la fois mort et vivant" (Harel 25) -- a language, a country, an identity that is at once lost and recaptured.

This quest for an incorporation of the lost object does not necessarily entail silence on the part of the melancholic

subject. On the contrary, it might well prompt her/his embodiment and agency. Harel explains:

> Il s'agira pour l'écrivain de partir à la recherche d'un territoire imaginaire qui est la recomposition partielle, lacunaire d'un investissement primitif où le sujet s'est perçu comme autochtone. (24)

However, this autonomous identity is merely a temporary reterritorialization, a stage which the immigrant subject overcomes once the dynamic interchange of cultures comes into play and again deterritorializes the previous identity. At this point, the act of writing becomes essential to the melancholic subject as it constitutes a means for the incorporation of her/his past, of her/his self. "Quand j'écris je rejoins cette vie antérieure d'où je viens. Où je suis née une première fois" (37) tells the narrator of *Entre les fleuves*. While writing about her/his experiences of migration, uprooting and exile, the subject is able to "faire revivre cette survivance mélancholique de la langue maternelle" (Harel 25). Therefore, the act of writing gives the absence (of homeland, of the maternal language) a presence and, at the same time, "constitue en quelque sorte la structure qui permettra au sujet mélancholique d'affirmer sa propre identité" (Harel 25).

The quest for "le territoire imaginaire" that marks a site in which the migrant subject can be (re)constituted is intended to provide this space with a form "qui a fait l'objet

d'un abandon précoce, et à la configuration mémorielle de cet espace" (Harel 24). That is to say, the search must give a presence for the lost object by incorporating it in the current cultural context. For the migrant subject, this would entail adaptating to the psychic and linguistic position of Robin's "entre-deux":

> Désormais le temps d'ailleurs, de l'entre-trois langues, de l'entre-deux alphabets, de l'entre-deux mers, de l'entre-deux mondes, l'entre deux logiques, de l'entre-deux nostalgies. (1986, 67)

This site is between the subject's two known worlds, a place of heterogeneity in which both universes collide, and as such inform and influence her/him. It is also a site where the collective memory[19] of the country of origin and the collective memory of the adoptive country unite, each caught up in the process of the exiled subject's deterritorialization

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[19]I use Régine Robin's definition of collective memory:

> Faite de souvenirs réels ou de souvenirs écrans, de souvenirs 'enveloppés,' faite de témoignages directs ou de traditions familiales, elle doit déclencher un affect qui établit la participation du corps au souvenir. Elle est à la fois ce qui établit le lien entre la mémoire vivante, et la mémoire normée, mémoire de groupe, encadrée socialement, encadrée aussi par la tradition familiale. Mémoire identitaire, close sur elle même, menacée et jalouse de sa singularité. [...] cette mémoire n'est ni chronologique, ni distanciée. [...] Elle se définit d'abord comme une mémoire à la fois tenace et flou. Elle conserve, garde, commémore les traces. Sa temporalité est cyclique et/ou uchronique, symbolique, mêlant les lieux et les dates, les confondant parfois. (1989, 52-53)

and consequent reterritorialization. What emerges from this collision is a newly articulated, hybrid subjectivity that, as Robin explains, draws upon collective memory as points of origin only to reconfigure the very notions of memory and origin: "Ce qui est mémoire collective, texte national, intertexte pour les uns cependant, ne l'est pas pour les autres. Leur imaginaire va participer d'un autre intertexte, celui de la culture d'origine, d'une autre mémoire collective, [...] d'une autre sorte d'hybridité" (1989, 11).

In *Métamorphoses d'Ishtar*, the semi-autobiographical narrator has not yet adapted comfortably to the space of *entre-deux*. In other words, the relationship between the collective memory of the country of origin and that of the adoptive country is ambivalent. That the narrator has not yet fully accessed the collective memory of the new country is reflected in the following passage: "Cette ville [Montréal] à laquelle je n'appartiens pas ou pas encore ou presque et c'est pire" (1987, 41). Still firmly bound to her maternal language and the collective memory of her homeland the semi-autobiographical narrator of *Métamorphoses d'Ishtar* constitutes the ideal melancholic subject in search of reterritorialization in the new "territoire imaginaire." Nostalgia and melancholy reverbate in her tone as she recounts her tale of exile: "Que c'est lourd, et le coeur, le coeur pèse, lorsque je chante, c'est le coeur de l'amour, c'est la terre antique qui aime" (1987, 62). Furthermore, the

references to Montreal as the new " territoire imaginaire" are rare. The image, the memory of Sidon, of Egypt, the ravages of the war in Lebanon, still fresh in the narrator's memory, are constantly being superimposed on to the cultural space of Montreal: "Sidon à Montréal / voilà comment est mon exil / à peine suis-je née / que je n'existe / déjà plus" (1987, 8). No longer belonging to the country of origin and not yet to the adoptive country, the narrator feels constantly "en déséquilibre sur cette terre" (1991, 8), this land, this psychic space that is neither "here" nor "there."

As indicated in its title, this position of in-between fully erupts in Ltaif's second work, *Entre les fleuves*. As a continuation of *Les Métamorphoses d'Ishtar*, Ltaif's narrator once again contemplates the consequences of exile. The relationship between the new language and the maternal is again ambivalent and tortured. However, in *Entre les fleuves*, the narrator has made an adjustment. Time has passed. The words, no longer seeming foreign, do come easier. Ishtar,[20] the Mother of the fruitful breast, the deity who symbolically guides the narrator, has metamorphosed into Hécate, the goddess of crossroads, who now directs the (re)constitution of the narrator's new "territoire imaginaire." In *Entre les fleuves* Ltaif's migrant narrator has reterritorialized in the

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[20]The symbolic significance of the mythical deities is derived from Barbara Walker's *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols & Sacred Objects* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988).

new language. She has psychically and linguistically accessed the social and cultural space of Montreal. However, this is not to say that she has "acculturated" to the new society, but rather that she has established the new "territoire imaginaire" from her perspective, leaving her past still intact ("Je ne me détacherai pas de l'histoire. De ce qui, dans l'histoire nous a tatouées" [1991, 47]), and thus creating a new site in which to place herself:

> J'ai élu pour terre son corps à Elle. Élu pour territoire d'où naître une deuxième fois. De personne. [...] L'impossible objet abstrait prenait visage. Je lui avais donné forme. (1991, 26)

And, it is only by occupying a position of "between two rivers," between two realities or inhabiting the cosmopolitan space of Montreal that the narrator is able to live and express herself. Her declaration that "Sans cette M.[ontréal] je serais morte" (1991, 26) indicates her realization that the collective memory of her native country and the collective memory of her adoptive country no longer participate in an oppositional relationship. Through her, the former's collective memory now forms part of the collective memory of Quebec, and more specifically, of Montreal. As such, in a transcultural context, "[i]l en émerge une réalité nouvelle, [...] un phénomène nouveau, originel et indépendant" (Lamore 18). In this instance, the two memories operate, to use Said's musical term from his article titled "Reflections on exile,"

"contrapuntally," that is "composed of two or more relatively independent melodies sounded together" (*The Random House College Dictionary*). As a result, in *Entre les fleuves*, Ltaif's narrator adapts favourably to the position of in-between where, to quote Said, "both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally" (172). Whereas in Ltaif's first work, this position where the narrator "voi[t] double : l'Est et l'Ouest" is demarcated as "la place / de la douleur" (40), in *Entre les fleuves* it constitutes the site of liberty and (re)birth, a nurturing familiar space that allows the narrator the freedom to (re)create herself in the new "imaginaire sociale" in the process of writing:

> [...] soudain, me voilà renaître à nouveau entre ses doigts, c'est moi qui avait placé ses doigts, et j'avais cherché à éclore d'Elle, j'ai cherché à la connaître, à la lire, à la noyer de lettres, je décidais qu'elle allait naître de moi aussi. (7)

Montreal's distinctive geographic and linguistic realities hold a special significance for the narrator of *Entre les fleuves* as they contribute to her transformation. As an island between two rivers, land surrounded by water, Montreal constitutes a self-contained entity that is at once attached to and separated from the continent. Furthermore, it is also the only place in Canada where the contact between French and English, along with a multitude of other languages,

forms part of daily life. For Ltaif's narrator who is already well versed in French, the linguistic reality of Montreal offers a sense of familiarity in the North American context. Robin explains this phenomenon:

> À Montréal, on parle français, on peut se retrouver dans sa langue, mais en même temps, c'est une autre langue; il y joue de l'autre. Il y aussi l'autre langue, l'anglais qui est devenu leur [des immigrant-e-s] nouvelle langue, une espèce de *lingua franca* de notre siècle qu'elles ont appris à domestiquer. À Montréal, elles seraient à la fois dedans et dehors. Pas concernées, concernées. La fleur de lys, la société Saint-Jean Baptiste, non. Le cosmopolitisme. Des paumées parmi d'autres paumées, des immigrantes parmi d'autres immigrants, un lieu possible, improbable. (1989, 10)

For Robin, Montreal constitutes simultaneously a possible and an improbable place. By the same token, Ltaif's narrator refers to Montreal as an "île du Naufragé [où] Raisons et Folie s'affrontent" (1991, 8) and a place that "ne ressemble pas à la réalité. Elle est imaginaire. Une terre d'exil. Ma terre à moi" (1991, 26). Montreal constitutes a space that is constantly on the verge of becoming something else, shaped and influenced by various collective memories which it inhabits and by which it is inhabited. As such, Montreal may be viewed as a place open to transformation, an urban enclave whose

makeup feeds on plurality, difference, the daily encounter with the foreigner, the other. Montreal's diverse cultural and linguistic reality emblematically mirror and affirm the plurality of the migrant subject's own identity and of the concept of identity in general.

For the migrant subject seeking some sort of temporary reterritorialization, this realization of Montreal's cultural heterogeneity displaces the "us/them," or the self/other opposition which is constantly at play in the formulation and/or affirmation of one's identity. In this opposition it is the hegemonic point of view which relegates the "other" to the margins and labels it as "them."[21] As formulated by Ltaif's narrator, this peripheral position is borne out of the adoptive land's privileged discourse that

> *pose la grande question de la différence*
> *entre cultures*
> *entre moeurs et coutumes*
> *entre mourir d'amour ou mourir de vivre.*
> *De savoir vivre*
> *avec les autres*
> *de ne plus savoir vivre.*
> *Qui pose la question de l'indifférence*
> *ou de cette différence d'éthique.* (1991, 28)

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[21] In the Québécois context this is further problematized since the position of other is not only occupied by the incoming immigrants but also the minority anglophone population, who in a Canadian context, act as a majority.

However, as Ltaif's narrator further argues, it is time to renegotiate the discourse of difference

> *Qui pose la question de l'origine.*
> *Qui ne trouve pas de réponse.*
> *Qui le sait d'avance par intuition.*
> *Qui ne fait plus la différence.*
> *Pourquoi faire la différence?* (1991, 28)

In other words, for Ltaif's narrator, the objective should entail the incorporation of the difference within the larger transcultural context, without the total erasure of that difference. Furthermore, the union of various cultures in one geographical site prompts one to realize, on a wider scheme, that difference is already a part of each individual. That is, the foreigner, the other, does not reside outside our being, but, as argued by Kristeva, "lives within us" and "is the hidden face of our identity" (1). The narrator of *Entre les fleuves* clearly affirms that exile is not only a condition caused by border crossing, but also a natural state of our very being:

> *Voici mon exil.*
> *Celui qui ne fuit pas seulement la guerre.*
> *Celui qui prend racine aux racines du déracinement profond qui se trouve à l'origine du sens de la vie en dedans de nous.* (28)

The realization that the common denominator of all human existence is an always already de-centered subject, one internally inhabited by foreigners, becomes a source of solace and, as Kristeva contends, "turns 'we' into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible" (1).

By adopting this transcultural stance which views identity as an "ensemble de transmutations constantes" (Lamore 19), rather than as a monolithic entity with a centre and a unitary origin, the migrant subject occupies a privileged positon. Harel explains:

> Il [le sujet immigrant] accentue en somme l'étrangéité de la culture en confondant à plaisir extériorité et intériorité, enracinement et déracinement. En valorisant une conflictualité productrice de métissage, l'écrivain migrant privilégie la mobilité comme mode d'insertion dans la culture au détriment de la sédentarité. Pour ce dernier, la question de bornage, de la sédimentation et de la cristallisation des cultures se pose avec une acuité certaine (24).

Throughout *Entre les fleuves* the concept of identity is questioned; identity is never seen as a unified entity, permanently territorialized, but a composite construct, constantly fragmented, deterritorialized. Ltaif's narrator ventures into the time of pre-history to make her point:

> Avant toutes les lois humaines, avant toute société, la nature se multipliait. À l'origine. Avant Dieu. Avant l'unicité suprême. Il y avait foisonnement. Sussurement. Vie grouillante. [...] Il n'y a pas d'indifférence mais équilibre naturel. (37)

Against this conceptualization, the narrator of *Entre les fleuves* reconsiders her past and constitutes herself as a subject who has always been immersed in plurality:

> C'est difficile de me décrire tellement je me vide pour recevoir tant de représentations graphiques de la fureur, de la douleur, de la joie en toutes les langues. Je ne sais plus ma langue natale. Tellement j'ai entendu de langues dans mon enfance.
>
> Tellement j'ai appris à parler de langues. Une langue pour chaque culture, pour chaque culte. Quel jardin vais-je faire croître? Mon jardin collectionne les ruines. Je ne puise qu'aux sources vives et vivifiantes. Mes peintures, les plus modernes, sont celles qui se nourrissent des origines. Non celles qui n'ont pas de racines. (36)

In this plurality of languages, cultures and origins, the narrator finds the source of agency and creativity. Her having arrived at this new conception of self-creation is even graphically marked on her body. Cultural variance, according

to the narrator of *Entre les fleuves*, even appears to have its corporeal manifestation:

> Ma figure a les traits de l'humanité entière et de ses diversités. Yeux bridés, lèvres charnues. Et visage de toutes les rondeurs. Et peaux brunes et nuancées. (36)

As a product of several linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the narrator of *Entre les fleuves* constitutes herself both physically and psychologically as Kristeva's *sujet-en-procès*, a subject-in-the-process-of-becoming, a subject who is simultaneously informed and (re)constructed by references stemming from two (or more) cultural spheres, two "imaginaires sociaux." Like the city she inhabits, the narrator is a subject on the verge of constantly becoming something else, a subject participating in the perpetual process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. It is no longer the question of rooting or belonging, but one of mobility, of a perpetual departure that she experiences and conveys through the act of writing:

> Ma mémoire se déroule d'elle-même et sans résistance aucune jusqu'à ne plus se rompre. Mais rompre enfin et libre reprendre mes ailes, l'envol, reprendre l'exil, le souffle interrompu, et la traversée renouvelée de l'éternelle histoire. (1991, 51)

The eternal story, to which the narrator refers, is the migrant's tale marked by what Robin refers to as "l'écriture nomade" (1989, 10), the type of writing in which the migrant writer, no longer confined to the signifying system of the homeland nor to the one of the adoptive country, "se laisse[] guider et vers nulle part" (Ltaif 91, n.p.). The only anchor, territoriality, at this point is the very act of writing, the act of naming, the symbolic representation of thoughts where language, like identity, is not perceived as an "ouvrage fait..., main une activité en train de se faire" (von Humboldt, qtd. in Gobard, 23). In his essay on language and writing in the Québécois context, Bertrand arrives at a similar conclusion:

> C'est que la langue n'est pas une entité figée, sauf lorsqu'on dégage d'elle une structure ou une norme, mais en ce qui concerne la pratique de la langue, celle-ci est en variation continue, et non seulement ne cesse de se métamorphoser, mais doit être reprise, créée à nouveau par chaque usager créateur. (50)

Although Ltaif's act of symbolic representation coincides with the dynamic nature of linguistic practices in Quebec, in her work there is an additional emphasis on the migrant woman writer's need to "[t]ransforme[r] la langue. Crée[r] une nouvelle langue" (1991, n.p.).

In *Entre les fleuves* symbolic representation transforms and creates a new language. This type of symbolic subversion coincidentally supports the "feminine"[22] writing project which, according to Louky Bersianik, a Québécois feminist writer, seeks "to transform darkness into light, to give the new energy to the imagination's symbolizing function, to convert existing symbols, to manipulate them according to a new symbolic logic so that they emerge with new resonances, new interpretations" (Qtd. in Gould, 38). Whereas linguistic exile is the major concern of Ltaif's earlier work, the focus of *Entre les fleuves* is a symbolic exile, a symbolic rupture and its consequent reterritorialization, which are, according to Ltaif's narrator, "le plus dur à vivre [...] Le rattachement symbolique aussi" (50). In this quest for symbolic reterritorialization, symbolic does not refer to the order of meaning imposed by the hegemonic patriarchal

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[22] And here I use "feminine" to suggest a culturally gendered discourse. Karen Gould further elaborates upon this notion in her extensive study of "écriture au féminin" in the Québécois context. Drawing upon French theoreticians like Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, which have had an enormous impact on Québécois feminist writers, Gould considers this concept of writing "as an imaginative site on which to construct new identities for women and as an indication of an emerging desire of contemporary women to transform themselves, both individually and collectively, into autonomous agents in the process of signification" (36-37). On a textual level, as Gould further notes, the ultimate goal of "écriture au féminin" is the destabilization and paramount dislocation of the patriarchal discourse by "privileging the imaginary over the symbolic, of excess and desire over censorship and repression" (37) as well as the "reposition[ing] the discussion of women's identity around the more fluid concepts of movement, fluctuation, contradiction, and plurality" (37).

discourse,[23] but rather to a system of signification with which the narrator, as a migrant woman, may identify. It is, hence, a search for a discourse that draws its symbolic reference from a combination of the experience of migrant and of woman. Positing the margin and woman as sites of empowerment and creativity, the migrant and "feminine" discourses deterritorialize the hegemonic patriarchal discourse from within. As such, symbolic reterritorialization is perceived not only as the narrator's imperative to restore her identity but also as an act of subversion, Deleuze and Guattari's "line of escape."[24]

Rejecting the monolithic nature of the hegemonic patriarchal discourse, the "feminine" and migrant discourses rely on a plurality drawn from "la jouissance de la traversée des signes" (Harel 25). In other words, in the migrant context, signifying systems stemming from several cultures will nourish the text of the migrant writer. In a similar manner, the "feminine" discourse renounces the status of the

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[23] The dominant patriarchal discourse is the phallogocentric discourse that privileges "the phallus as universal arbiter of sexuality" and "the Word as ultimate arbiter of truth" (Wright 317).

[24] Deleuze and Guattari use "line of escape" to refer to concepts, symbols, metaphors that "close in on [themselves]," or, for which there exists no predetermined schema of representation:

> It is a map of intensities. It is an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other, grafted onto the man insofar as he is searching for a way out. It is a creative line of escape that says nothing other than what it is. (1986, 36)

phallus as the (one and only) transcendental signifier by (re)capturing other signifiers, based on the "feminine" experience. To frame this intersection of the "feminine" and migrant discourses in Rey Chow's conceptualization of ethnicity would imply that "social experience[s] ... [are] not completed once and for all but ... [are] constituted by a continual, often conflictual, working-out of its grounds" (143). It is in such a site of rupture and resolution that the narrator of *Entre les fleuves* locates her symbolic reterritorializtion. As Ltaif herself affirms, as a woman migrant writer in Quebec, her inevitable objective is to

> crée[r] un rhythme autre que français de France ou français d'ailleurs. Je voudrais évoquer les poèmes de Césaire (Martiniquais), de Senghor (Sénégalais), de Roland Giguère, [...] St-Denis Garneau ou ceux d'Anne Hébert... Le poète forge une langue au carrefour des rhythmes. Rhythmes et sonorités arabes, africains, tam-tams, gigues ou danses traditionelles aux rythmes différents. Rites différents. Ouverture de la voix. *Des* voix. (1991, n.p.)

The voices to which Ltaif refers, however, are not only the voices of diverse cultures inscribed in the author's "imaginaire,"[25] but also the voices of women, particularly

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[25] Robin refers to the individual's "imaginaire" as her/his cultural memory, the memory which dually represents the migrant writer's social and literary space:

those internal ones, the voices of mothers from whom she is born and which continually inhabit her. According to Ltaif herself the experience of exile is invariablly linked to "l'image d'une séparation de la mère" (1993, 65). In *Entre les fleuves*, these voices are symbolized in the form of various mythical dieties which the narrator evokes and which, coincidentally, correspond to the various stages of the narrator's adjustment to the new sociocultural space. For example, as I have already indicated, in the first part of *Entre les fleuves*, titled "À l'ombre d'Hécate," it is the voice of Hécate, the mythical goddess of crossroads and choice that governs the narrator as she writes:

> *Hécate a le visage changeant de celle qui aime.*
> *Elle est au carrefour des figures mythiques,*
> *au fond de mes ténèbres à moi.*
> *Elle tient mille torches,*
> *a choisi de se mettre à la place de mon coeur*
> *pour m'éclairer monstreusement.*
>
> *C'est sous cet éclairage que je décide de peindre l'amour.* (7)

In addition to symbolizing the narrator's first stage of

> l'individu...bricole comme il peut sa représentation du passé, son imagerie, son récit, dans l'ordre d'un moule narratif obligé ou dans la dispersion de souvenirs-flashes, dans un sens préétabli dans un combat identitaire, dans une contre-mémoire fragmentaire, ou à l'inverse, dans une dispersion de mémoires migrantes. (1987, 56)

exile, the turning point, Hécate also connotes an ability to undergo matamorphosis. This is indicated in her gift to transform herself into "Dame Hathor," the Great Mother of the primeval universe representing the East, or "Dame Occident" (13) its western counterpart. A little later "She" is referred to as Myrrha, the virgin mother of the sea, as Morgana, the death goddess and finally as the magician. These series of allusions to mythic figures who are also associated with motherhood serve to underline the narrator's strong ties to the concept of mother land and tongue. Moreover, the proliferation of M's of the last series of names (Myrrha, Morgana, magician) alliteratively alludes to the otherwise neglected symbol of the mother. One is even reminded of the M of Montreal, a place that reminds Ltaif of "une femme d'âge mûr" (1993, 65). At the same time, this notion of motherhood does not limit the narrator to a unified and unitary identity. On the contrary, the multiplicity of figures evoked opens up the possibility of rethinking the self.

The same section of *Entre les fleuves* reveals that these voices, symbolically represented as mythical dieties, are an extension of the narrator's own subconscious (Hécate is to be found in the murky depths of the narrator) that inform, along with the consciousness, the narrator. In other words, they are the multiple identities stemming from various socio-cultural spaces which inhabit the narrator: ("sous toutes Ses formes, [...] Ses âges les plus anciens et les plus réels, [...] Ses

textes qui respirent malgré le temps qui passe" [1991, 8]). The way in which these multiple voices and internalized mythic figures configure in the ever-changing subjectivity of the narrator is marked by the shifts in pronouns. Throughout Ltaif's text, these identities are referred to as "Elle" or "Vous." To quote Verduyn, the "'I' is reborn at the same time as the 'I' gives birth to 'She'" (98).

In the second part of *Entre les fleuves*, "De l'exil," the narrator admits that the "She" is Melaina Kole, "mon double caché" (26), the keeper of the narrator's secret of her "Orient intérieur" (30). This part also marks the second stage of the narrator's adjustment to the new socio-cultural space, the realization of the consequences of the ultimate separation from the mother:

> *Je ne la cultiverai plus*
> *cette vigne éblouissante de mon passé,*
> *les raisins gros*
> *comme chaque doigt d'une main.*
> *Ni les grenades ni les fleurs sauvages,*
> *je regarderai*
> *bourgeonner les arbres du Mont Royal,*
> *et sans un cri*
> *je souffrirai de joie.*
> *Je mourrai de joie,*
> *dans la dignité de ceux qui meurent*
> *dans le grand Nord.*

Loin de ma famille, de mes amies,

de mon ancienne vie.

Ne me réclamant plus d'aucune tribu.

Mourir libre et déracinée. (31-32)

This naming of herself, her other, is an attempt on the narrator's part to transcend and obliterate the identity linked to the mother land in order to accommodate the new identity of uprootedness.

However, as the third part of the text, titled "Les sèves fortes," reveals, the separation from mother(s) does not have to translate into the mother(s)' disappearance. Since they are already part of the individual, her subconscious, they will always be intrinsically present. It is this realization that prompts the narrator of *Entre les fleuves* to draw upon numerous legendary and mythic figures and juxtapose them in paradoxical ways. In her analysis of Hélène Cixous' text *Illa*, Conley explains the place of myth in women's texts:

> How is one going to call the other without killing her? The writer likes to wander in mythic countries. Myth writes out in philosophical terms basic human questions. It also allows for a certain elevation, a noble tone and, implicitly, a distancing from self from the other. That very distance keeps the other alive, as opposed to realism that names too directly. (75)

Hence, the "She" of the third part is transformed from Tiamat,

"[l]le monstre femelle du chaos originel" (35), representing the narrator's initial state of freedom and rebelliousness, into a Simûrgh, a bird made up thirty different birds in order to symbolize all the birds in the world. This symbol corresponds to the recognition of, as Ltaif herself affirms, "la multitude d'identités qui m'habite: l'orientale, l'occidentale, l'arabe, la québécoise que je suis devenue, l'égyptienne et la libanaise que je n'ai jamais cessé d'être" (1993, 65). The narrator then has a choice of becoming Kronos, Father Time who devoured his children, or Lilith, the virgin mother. In other words, the narrator has the choice between the dominant linear patriarchal discourse or "écriture féminine" that recaptures the symbolic mother figure. In the end "She" is transformed from Mother, to Muse and finally into Ondine, "Mi-oiseau. Mi-sirène" (50), a goddess of water in Nordic mythology.

It is the signification of Ondine that realizes the polyvalency of the narrator's identity. On the transcultural level, as a symbol, the narrator's referents belong neither to Eastern nor Western socio-cultural spaces indicating nomadism, an opening to further migration. As well, as the deity of water, Ondine is the mother of the very source of life. In French the link between mother and water is further implicated by the homonyms of mère/mer. As Ondine the narrator is represented at once as having a fluid subjectivity and being a woman. In this final stage of the narrator's adjustment to

her new socio-cultural space, the narrator has passed from what Starobinsky calls "l'état de la mélancolie à l'état de fureur" in order to arrive at "l'état d'affirmation, d'intégration [où] tu milites...tu deviens de plus en plus...femme."[26] As the narrator of *Entre les fleuves* affirms it is only by adopting "le langage des Sirènes" (44) that she is able to discover that "Du fond de mon être et dans tout ce que je fais, jusque dans la plus fine ramification de mon être, je serai et resterai une femme" (44). However, woman exists only in plurality. She is the child, the mother, the native land, the adoptive land, the constant exile.

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[26] In the film *L'Arbre qui dort rêve à ses racines* Ltaif makes this reference to Starobinsky.

Chapter Three

> But to me, the word "Canada" has ominous echoes of the "Sahara."
> - Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*

It is the complex reality of Quebec's contemporary cultural diversity that serves as the charged setting for Mona Latif Ghattas's novel *Le Double Conte de l'exil*. As the title indicates, the exile explored in this work is not limited to a singular experience, nor to one gender. In fact, Latif Ghattas's work juxtaposes two voices of exile: the voice of Madeleine, née Manitakawa, a native living in Montreal, and that of Fêve, a refugee from the desert of Anatolia. This interweaving of voices reflects the author's own conception of an ideal transcultural society in which there would exist a "cohabitation de la singularité et du pluriel [...] de la différence et du même" (Lequin 1992, 38). Latif Ghattas represents this chance encounter between Madeleine and Fêve, two wanderers from disparate parts of the world, as an "étreinte accueillant à la fois le même et l'autrui" (Latif

Ghattas 11) and makes it the focal point of her exploration of other solitudes inhabiting Quebec. The experience of exile she examines in this fictional work draws upon Latif Ghattas's own life and at the same time poses questions about the social and political fabric of Quebec.

Born in Cairo in 1946, Mona Latif Ghattas has lived in Quebec since 1966. After completing a specialized bachelor's degree in the Dramatic Arts, she went on to receive a Master's degree in French studies from the University of Montreal. Not only an accomplished novelist, Latif Ghattas is also a poet, theatre director and narrator. Five of her eight works have been published in Quebec including three poetic collections (*Poèmes faxés* [1994], *La triste beauté du Monde* [1993], *Quarante Voiles pour un exil* [1986]) and an earlier novel titled *Les Voix du Jour et de la Nuit* (1988). Several of her poems and articles have appeared in Québécois literary and theatrical journals such as *Tessera*, *Estuaire*, *Trois*, *Moebius*, *Jeu*, and *Pratiques Théâtrales*. While her earlier work was dominated by an autobiographical voice, the later texts move further away towards fiction. However, even these later works manifest Latif Ghattas's preoccupation with exile. As noted by Lequin in her extensive study of the author's oeuvre, Latif Ghattas has always tended toward an exploration of an "exil singulier et pluriel qui marque l'histoire, la sienne, mais aussi celle des êtres en dérive -- intérieure, politique, économique, etc." (n.d., 2). Whereas in Nadine Ltaif's work

the experience of migration is posited as the exile's conscious battle with the self in the quest for an identity where writing becomes the fruitful site of the crystallization of that identity, Latif Ghattas goes beyond the internal struggles of the exiled subject and places that experience in the host society. This allows the author to examine exile both as an experience initiated through the actual displacement and as a metaphorical experience of otherness as a result of colour and gender. Furthermore, beyond their common denominator of an estrangement from the self, both experiences of exile have socio-political and economic ramifications. It must be noted, however, that Latif Ghattas does not necessarily dwell on the exile's victimization and, in fact, also highlights "l'espoir du repos et l'aptitude à la vie" (Lequin, n.d., 2).

Latif Ghattas' interweaving of the socio-political aspect of exile with the personal corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari's second characteristic of minor literature which they designate as "the connection of the individual to a political immediacy" (1986, 18). Contrary to major literatures in which the social, economic and political contexts may serve merely as a backdrop, in minor literature, according to Deleuze and Guattari, they are brought to the foreground:

> [Minor literature's] cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all

> the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it. In this way, the family triangle connects to other triangles -- commercial, economic, bureaucratic, jurdicial -- that determine its values. (1986, 17)

Deleuze and Guattari's positing of this political immediacy in minor literature is based upon passages they derive from Kafka's *Diaries*. One such passage, central to Deleuze and Guattari's formulations reads:

> What in great literature goes on down below, constituting a not indispensable cellar of the structure, here takes place in the full light of day, what is there a passing interest for a few, here absorbs everyone no less than as a matter of life and death. (Qtd. in Deuleuze and Guattari 1986, 17)

What is of direct relevance to my analysis is the manner in which minor literature, as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari, lures the unsaid and the hidden to the surface while underlining the social and the political contexts. To give voice to that which would be otherwise silent disrupts the assumption of normalcy, be it textual, social, or political. This deterritorialization of the norms opens up a space in which a writer of minor literature can explore new conceptualizations and representations. In Latif Ghattas' work, this particular kind of foregrounding is achieved

through the repetitive act of storytelling which becomes a compulsive need for Fêve to "raconter [le conte] avant qu'il ne me raconte" (28). That storytelling is at the very centre of the migrant's attempt to locate and inscribe his/her "imaginaréalité" (Latif Ghattas 83) is underlined in the following depiction of the storyteller:

> *Un conteur fabuleux. C'est sa fonction. Depuis hier ou depuis toujours. Un conteur sans lois préfigurées. Sans autre foi que celle qui surgit avec fougue quand le flot du mot crève son coeur pour jaillir dans le désert, et que, soudain, les astres les plus inaccessibles et les grains de sable les plus invisibles vibrent aussi de cette croyance.* (Latif Ghattas 29-30)

It is important to note that the storyteller is not subject to any set of prescriptions, i.e. he/she is seen as a deterritorialized figure who can give voice to alternative narrative forms and spaces. Fêve's personal journal, inscribed in italics, disrupts the otherwise third-person narrative form of *Le Double Conte de l'exil*, by drawing upon myth and the oral tradition of his homeland. As such, this teller is in a position to deterritorialize the existing forms of representation and to examine other realities, other "imaginaréalités."

In her essay titled "Espaces incertains de la culture," Sherry Simon expands upon the potential subversive nature of

the literary text:

> Le pouvoir de transgression du texte littéraire relève à la fois de son pouvoir de déranger l'ordre symbolique (sa modernité) et de sa capacité d'inscrire dans le texte une réalité sociale occultée (le féminisme). Ce double pouvoir suppose une interaction, voire une véritable confusion, entre les deux ordres. Le lieu d'énonciation est multiple; le texte polyphonique. (44)

In Latif Ghattas's text Simon's feminist context is replaced by that of alterity. As a result, there is a similar opening onto polyphony which in turn makes possible the exploration and the construction of an alternate literary space, a new "territoire imaginaire."

The "territoire imaginaire," the "imaginaréalité" which Latif Ghattas explores in *Le Double Conte de l'exil* is Montreal's sub-culture of the working class composed of men and women of various cultural backgrounds. The cramped space of Madeleine's work place, the laundromat of a large Montreal hospital, serves as a symbolic microcosm of Quebec's diverse cultural make-up. The dynamics among the laundromat's employees - Madeleine, the Three Claras and the young Asian - highlight some of the prevailing attitudes concerning alterity and identity circulating within Quebec.

The Three Claras - Clairette Légaré, Clarence Lindsay and Clara Leibovitch - typify Quebec's initial constituents:

francophones, anglophones and eastern Europeans. The three women are not only linked by the closeness of their names but also share a common medium of expression; they communicate with each other in French. Beyond this, they are bound together through physical and spatio-temporal factors:

> La ligue des Trois Claras était implantée dans la buanderie depuis quelques décennies. Elles s'étaient regroupées avec le temps, presque naturellement, par affinité de couleur. Elles avaient toutes les trois les cheveux roux. De plus, elles avaient curieusement les mêmes initiales. Leurs noms se suivaient sur la fiche de paye la plus ancienne de l'établissement. (54)

Appearing and functioning as a single unit in their interactions with the rest of the workers, the Three Claras serve to represent and critique the dialectic of us and them prevalent in the hegemonic discourse.[27]

In the first instance it is Madeleine, an aboriginal woman, who is seen to be isolated and rendered silent in her workplace. Although Madeleine "ne parlait presque jamais.

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[27]One is reminded here by Kafka's triangular formations that operate as a single unit. For example, in *The Metamorphosis*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the familial triangle (father-mother-child) and its deterritorialization by the progressive formation of other triangular units, namely the bureaucratic and commercial (11-15). The Samsa family unit is ruptured not only by Gregor's metamorphosis but also by the intrusion of the bureaucratic triangle represented by, at the beginning of the text, the menacing director, then by the father's resumption of work at the bank and finally by the three bureaucrat lodgers.

Répondait simplement quand on la questionnait" [16], she stands as a product of and a threat to the hegemonic discourse. Madeleine's silence may be perceived as a function of her marginal position in a social order that has refused to incorporate the aboriginal perspective. As Pierre L'Hérault contends in his article on the presence of a native voice within Quebec, Madeleine's brief and functional responses reflect her internalization of attitudes towards the native both in a social and literary context:

> Quant à la dimension amérindienne, on doit noter que, jusqu'à maintenant, d'une part, il n'y a pas eu beaucoup de voix amérindiennes venues réclamer leur place dans la culture et le texte québécois... (103)

Beneath Madeleine's silence and apparent subservience there is an implicit challenge to gender divisions that would normally exclude her from the physically demanding job she performs at the laundromat. The tasks she takes on are usually assigned to men, while the less tiresome jobs are performed by the women. Furthermore, her mere physical presence is a reminder of a deterritorialization of Quebec's hegemonic discourse. On a symbolic level at least, Madeleine's aboriginal heritage has been part of Quebec life since before the coming of the charter groups and the initial immigrants. Even if there is no official recognition of the important place she occupies as someone from this heritage, her presence

helps to bring history to the fore. In an ironic passage, Madeleine's rightful place in the founding of her social order is displaced onto the plane of the laundromat:

> Madeleine était là bien avant elles (Trois Claras), bien installée à la buanderie. Elle avait assisté à leur intégration. À l'époque, elle n'était qu'une toute jeune fille, naïve et innocente, alors qu'elles étaient arrivées là, adultes et déjà pleines de malice. (55)

Further echoing socio-historical realities, the Three Claras are uncomfortable with, and have difficulty relating to, Madeleine:

> Les Trois Claras sont mal à l'aise devant Madeleine. C'est le moins que l'on puisse dire. D'un malaise qu'elles ne parviennent pas très bien à identifier. Même si de longs fils blancs sillonnent aujourd'hui son chignon noir et qu'elle semble avoir perdu la fougue de la jeunesse, il y a quelque chose dans son regard qui les effraie. Pourtant, toute la douceur du monde est diluée dans ce regard. (55)

It is the post-colonial conceptualization of "the gaze" (le regard) as elaborated by Chow that adequately summarizes the dynamics between the Three Claras and Madeleine:

> Contrary to the model of Western hegemony in which the colonizer is seen as a primary, active "gaze"

> subjugating the native as passive "object," I want to argue that it is actually the colonizer who feels looked at by the native's gaze. This gaze, which is neither a threat nor a retaliation, makes the colonizer "conscious" of himself, leading to his need to turn this gaze around and look at himself... (51)

The Three Claras' discomfort stems from a misreading of cultural codes; Madeleine communicates primarily through gestures,[28] while the Three Claras rely mostly on the spoken word. On the level of fiction, Latif Ghattas would seem to echo L'Hérault's assesment of the ambivalent relations between the natives and the Québécois: "les Québécois ne savent pas très bien quelle place ils leur feront" (103).

The arrival of the young Asian, a new type of immigrant, at the laundromat poses a further threat to the status embodied by the Three Claras. The Three Claras' malaise with Madeleine's undauted silence and her physical and behavioural differences are now projected onto the Asian by whom they are intrigued:

> Son visage mystérieux, impénétrable, les irrite, les effraie. Sans doute à cause de ses traits

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[28] Throughout *Le Double conte de l'exil* Latif Ghattas highlights Madeleine's gestures and movements: "[e]lle travaillait dans une bonne humeur qui transpirait à travers ses gestes, son mouvement" (16), "Madeleine s'est glissée subtilement dans la pénombre...puis se retira comme s'esquivent les chats" (23), etc.

> qu'elle ne reconnaissent pas, de sa totale différence de mouvement, de son silence inquiétant. (99)

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva contends that the realization of the other's physical differences only reveals one's own fear of the unknown, a realization that is at once intriguing and repulsive:

> At first, one is struck by his particularity - those eyes, those lips; those cheek bones, that skin unlike others, all that distinguishes him and reminds one that there is *someone* there... But this grasping the foreigner's features, one that captivates us, beckons and rejects at the same time. (3)

However, it is important to note that in *Le Double Conte de l'exil* the Three Claras react differently to Madeleine's particularities than they do to the young Asian's. The Three Claras' silent incomprehension of Madeleine gives way to irritation with and hatred of the young Asian:

> La face impassible du jeune Asiatique irrite les Trois Clara d'autant qu'elles constatent que, même s'il ne comprend pas un mot de leur langue, il accomplit son travail sans erreur. Comment peut-il savoir si bien ce qu'il doit faire. Il accomplit le trajet des points de chutes à la buanderie comme on fait un pélerinage... De leur angle de vision

> elles perçoivent des choses qui les déboussolent et aiguisent en elles une sorte de haine indéfinie, une haine, comme on dirait, épidermique, épidémique, qui peut même devenir contagieuse. (100)

The source of the Three Claras' irritation stems from an incident in which the young Asian is perceived as an economic threat to their livelihood.[29] While one of the Claras is away on sick leave, the young Asian's mother fills Clairette's position competently and even manages to get another job within the laundromat. This incident provokes anger in another Clara, Clara Leibovitch, who has been trying to secure the same position for her newly immigrated sister-in-law. The Three Claras' anxieties appear to have some justification: "Si cet intrus complote pour gravir le moindre échelon... ou pis encore... s'il espère les forcer à prendre une retraite anticipée..." (101). However, the transformation of this fear into hatred for the young Asian seems to be subject to no reasoning: "Au fait, elles ne savent pas exactement ce qui, en lui, les rend furieuses" (100). Through this particular angle, Latif Ghattas represents the more profound nature of hatred for the other as an enigmatic human experience, embedded in

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[29]In Kalin and Berry's article, based on findings from a national survey of ethnic and multicultural attitudes, they conclude that although "the vast majority of Canadians are **quite tolerant and accepting** of ethnic diversity," the low levels of intolerance and negative attitudes that still exist "appear to be occasioned primarily by cultural and economic threat and insecurity" (109-110).

the psyche by the sheer force of historical conditioning:

> Et pourtant, ce genre de furie est toujours justifié par des images enfouies sourdement dans nos tiroirs à préjugés et dans le sac d'intolérance que nous avons hérité de l'Histoire. Ou alors, plus simplement, c'est le mystère de l'alchimie humaine. Ce mystère qui fait qu'entre une veille et un levant les humains deviennent féroces et se saccagent sans distinction. (100-101)

Latif Ghattas attributes the formation of the stereotype of the alien to these nebulous fears and anxieties. The stereotyping of other immigrants such as the Egyptians who walk around in their bathrobes, the Chileans, Salvadorians and Colombians who traffic in drugs, the Iranians who veil their women, etc. (Latif Ghattas 102-103) are part of the same mechanism that rejects the newcomer.

As the opening lines of Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* reveal, the image of the newcomer, the other and the feeling of hatred toward the other go hand-in-hand: "Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transperancy, opaque, unfathomable spur" (1). Like Latif Ghattas, Kristeva links the initial hatred for the other to the perceived threat to the existing political and economic order, a threat that ultimately asks the question whether we shall be, "intimately and subjectively, able to live with the others, to live *as others*, without ostracism but also without

levelling" (2). Unlike Latif Ghattas, Kristeva does not regard this unfounded hatred as mysterious, but attributes it to one's deep-rooted fear when facing one's own difference: "From heart pangs to first jabs, the foreigner's face forces us to display the secret manner in which we face the world, stare into all our faces, even the most tightly knit communities" (3-4). For Kristeva, this confrontation with the foreigner has the potential to critique and rearticulate the community. As formulated further by Kristeva, the acceptance of the foreigner as an integral part of one's self, and, of one's community "turns 'we' into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible" (1). In the context of *Le Double Conte de l'exil*, the Three Claras's fear of the young Asian may lead them to the questioning of their own citizenship, of their own "Québécois/Canadian" identity. In other words, in relation to Madeleine all three are immigrants from somewhere else, who, like the Asian, attempt to make a living in the new land. Were the Three Claras to arrive at a critical understanding of alterity, they too would actively contribute to the reconfiguration of their own community and identity.

It is Madeleine's reaction to the Asian that stands as an alternative response to the hegemonic discourse represented in the Three Claras' relegation of difference to the margins. As an individual who "n'a jamais fait partie d'aucune majorité" (101) (she grew up outside her aboriginal community), Madeleine is dumbfounded by the Three Claras' blatant hatred.

To the Asian's consistent work habits which the Three Claras "ne voient pas...du même oeil que Madeleine," the latter smiles with a welcoming gesture of affinity, "[d]'un sourire qui semble être une réponse à un salut" (100). In fact, it is the same inclusive gesture of understanding and acceptance that Madeleine offers Fêve and that facilitates his incorporation into her life and the Québécois society in general.

Through Madeleine's workplace Latif Ghattas examines social, economic and political exile in a society marked by its plurality, and as such deterritorializes the notion that identity is simply a matter of cultural and territorial belonging. After all, the Three Claras, the Asian and even Madeleine have different views of what it means to be Québécois/Canadian. However, it is through Madeleine's personal life, past and present, particularly the encounter with Fêve, that the author exposes an internal exile which eventually leads to the individual's affirmation of her/his identity. As Lequin contends, for Latif Ghattas, the construction of identity "se forme en dehors des discours d'autorité...en dehors de la culture intellectualisée" (n.d., 11), "en dehors de la théorie et de l'analyse" (n.d., 7). Essentially, Latif Ghattas represents the construction and inscription of identity as a complex process that entails the simulataneous positing of "la même et l'autrui" (Latif Ghattas 10) in the ritualism of the everyday reality. In *Le Double*

Conte de l'exil this is demonstrated by the third-person narrative which relates Madeleine's life story, including her brief but memorable life with Fêve.

Madeleine's/Manitakawa's story is one marked by a psychological, cultural, social, economic and sexual exile. She is described as one of these "êtres ainsi faits qu'ils se placent instinctivement hors de la majorité" (104). Growing up outside her aboriginal community, her physical appearance played a significant role in her isolation:

> Madeleine n'a jamais fait partie d'aucune majorité. Même quand elle était enfant. À l'école, les autres enfants la trouvaient trop brune-trop rouge. Il y avait rarement une place pour elle à la ronde ou à la marelle. (104)

Even her birth name, Manitakawa, denoted a difference that she desperately wanted to deny and irradicate. At the age of tweleve she changes her name to Madeleine in order to escape being teased and having her native name deformed. In that same year Madeleine is raped in the tavern where she has been helping her mother earn a living. This incident, although never further discussed, lives on as a repressed memory inscribed on Madeleine's body in form of eczema, an irritable rash on her thigh that resurfaces from time to time. Moreover, the rape triggers a physical transformation characterized by a certain heaviness of her entire being:

> Soudain sa voix devint rauque. Ses sourcils poussèrent furieusement. Le petit grain de beauté planté sous sa narine droite se durcit. Et son corps, lentement se mit à s'épaisser comme s'il voulait à tout jamais devenir muraille, tour de garde ou donjon. (14)

Madeleine perceives this physical and vocal transmutation as a form of ugliness with which she is comfortable, in so far as it further entrenches her alienation and exile.

Resisting victimization, Madeleine "comme tous les rebelles de l'humanité," (14) moves to Montreal where she finds some level of comfort in the city's cosmopolitanism where the inhabitants are "silencieux à son égard" (15). As an outcast/rebel her life of solitude is divided between her work, her two-room home and her imaginary travels. In the years that pass her physical appearance undergoes another type of transformation that further irradicates any visible marks of her aboriginal roots: "sa peau avait drôlement pâli et son chignon noir s'était mêlé de fils d'argent" (15). At work, where human interaction is inevitable, Madeleine is described as quiet and seemingly content, "tellement à l'aise dans ce lieu" (16). What the others are not aware of though is that this line of work nourishes Madeleine's fantasies of travel as the noises emanating from various machines "lui donnait l'illusion perpétuelle de rentrer de voyage" (16).

Madeleine's life changes drastically on the day when she meets Fêve, a refugee from Anatolia, on Montreal's pier and takes him in "sans le moindre préjugé" (9). It is the reciprocity not only of their cultural and territorial uprootedness that brings the two together but also of their interior exile. For both, the quest for an identity is based on an initial "exil de soi" (Lequin, n.d., 14). By embracing each other's difference and similarity, and exchanging personal tales, in the manner that is "au-delà des mots, des langues," (Lequin, n.d., 14) the two are able to forge new identities.

Fêve's story, whose truth seems "si cruelle qu'elle avait la folle allure d'un conte" (139), reveals that, like Madeleine, he too suffered a psychological, cultural and social exile in his country of origin, a place located "à la lisière d'Orient et d'Occident" (10). However, unlike Madeleine, it is the trauma and political consequences of a territorial war in his homeland that brings about Fêve's involuntary loss of memory and identity.[30] Not only does he witness the rape of his beloved, but after a bomb ravages his home Fêve is left without papers to prove his identity. Only by changing his name and identity would the new regime grant him a new set of papers. Without identity, a home and a

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[30] One can also argue that Madeleine too is a product of a territorial war. However, in her case the battle is not fought on an actual physical level but rather implicitly on a cultural and political sphere.

country to rely on, Fêve jumps into the sea where, by chance, he is rescued by a cargo ship and brought to the new land.

Upon his arrival to Montreal, Fêve discovers a different type of exile brought on by the experience of linguistic and geographic displacement. The expression of this experience is located in the other text of *Le Double Conte de l'exil* - Fêve's personal journal - the embedded and italicized first person narrative. This form of expression operates on two levels. By drawing on his own oral tradition of storytelling and myth, Fêve manages to disclose the tale of his past. As an articulation of the internalized experience of migration, Fêve's personal journal functions in a similar manner as Ltaif's *Entre les fleuves*, the migrant's need to assign order to his past, to endow his silence "*hâbleur[]*" (30) with speech and consequently to territorialize himself in the present. Like Ltaif's narrator who distances herself from the experience of exile by employing various prersonal pronouns to denote the "I" of the text, Fêve also makes a division between himself and "*le Conteur*," "*un homme qui a peur de mourir avant d'avoir conté*" (30):

> *Ce n'est pas moi qui parle c'est ma douleur. Mon impuissance, mon silence, ma langue devenue soudain analphabète lors du transfert dans l'espace où le destin m'a réfugié.* (27)

Since Fêve's account takes place in his language that is translated and inscribed into French, the quest here is not

for words to describe his experience but rather for the tone in which to tell his story:

> *Je disais qu'il y a un ton vert comme il y a un ton de voix pour aimer ou pour blesser. La vie se tisse et se défait selon le ton des choses. Tant qu'il n'en tient qu'à moi, je raconterai à mi-voix. Pourvu que ma mémoire voyageuse se maintienne dans la bonne tonalité.* (41)

This linguistic discrepency, however, only contributes to the deterritorialization of the realism and linearity of the narrative form. As Fêve himself cautions, his tale takes place in the "*suprenant écho de l'invraisemblable*" (30). It is important to note, however, that since for Latif Ghattas exile is lived in every day reality, Fêve's personal journal does not dwell on the lived and present experience of exile, (as does Ltaif's testimony), the consequence of territorial and geographic displacement. Instead, it functions as a mythic exploration of an "imaginaréalité," a personal history of the other that, by its articulation, especially in French, deterritorializes the very fabric of what is known as Québécois/Canadian History.

Latif Ghattas demonstrates the effects of migrant's experience on the broader concept of history through the cultural exchange that takes place at the personal level between Madeleine and Fêve. The effect of such an exchange conforms to Ortiz's notion of transculturation described as a

process "dans lequel on donne quelque chose en échange de ce qu'on reçoit: les deux parties de l'équation s'en trouvent modifiées" (Lamore 19). Along similar lines, Latif Ghattas describes Madeleine and Fêve's encounter as a process in which cultural interference, confronted on the personal level, is reciprocal and where difference is incorporated rather than excluded:

> Il a appris sa langue et lui a transmis des fragments de la sienne... Elle avait patiemment répété ces mots qu'il ne comprenait pas. Il les avait attentivement écoutés avec l'ardent désir de les induire dans son destin... Ils se sont inconsciemment transmis les codes de leur savoir. Dans la timidité des courageux qui survivent aux blessures de l'Histoire. (9-10)

For Latif Ghattas, acculturation, the exchange of cultural codes of knowledge is a process that, like the construction of identity, takes place outside the discourse of authority and intellectualized culture. Exile, as demonstrated by the author, is lived in every day reality and as such should be combatted within the same context.

For Madeleine, the realization of her identity as a woman and a native entails the overcoming of the repressed sadness which she has been denied and has herself been denying, a task accomplished only by accessing and embracing Fêve's difference. Fêve's presence disrupts Madeleine's monotonous

life of isolation and triggers in her "le sentiment d'être sur le point d'accomplir un exaltant voyage vers l'inconnu" (36). Through Fêve's personal tale, "son conte fantastique, hallucinant" (10) that reveals the exoticism of his homeland, Madeleine is finally able to live out her inner fantasies of travel. Furthermore, through Fêve's story from which erupts the voice of Miriam Nour, the omnipresent and undying woman of the desert who stands as a witness and a constant reminder of all the world's cruelty and beauty, Madeleine learns that "la douleur ne meurt jamais...[q]ue l'oubli n'existe pas" (11). As Fêve's tale "semblait vouloir se mêler à son ombre," (36) his and Mariam Nour's sadness serve to bring out Madeleine's own repressed sadness, "sa douloureuse réticence face au monde qui l'entoure" (36). Only then is Madeleine able to discover her new identity, a realization that ultimately terminates her "heaviness," silence and isolation from society:

> [...] elle constatait que grâce à ce mélange d'inquiétude, d'attachement douloureux et de curiosité passionnée, elle avait réussi à se défaire du poids le plus lourd qui pesait sur sa vie: le poids de l'ennui. (121)

At the end of *Le Double conte de l'exil* Madeleine attains personal agency. Not only does she verbally confront the Three Claras in their mistreatment of the Asian, but she also recalls her native heritage in order to help Fêve obtain his refugee status:

> "Je suis une Québécoise, moi. Une ancienne du "Kébec." Tu sais ce que signifie "Kébec"? "Là où passe le fleuve." J'ai des droits sur cette terre et je te garderai... (127)

On the other hand, through Madeleine's presence, Fêve is able to surmount his sadness marked by the memories of the volatile realty experienced in his homeland, his abrupt departure and his new status as a person "sans papiers, sans bagage, sans mémoire et sans nom" (20). It is Madeleine, "sa passerelle magique vers le présent" (92), who eases his integration into the new society and helps him forge an identity by focusing on the present, the every day:

> S'il avait relégué son passé brûlant dans les zones du rêves, il comprenait timidement que le présent ne lui accordera ses lettres de créance et un certain repos du coeur qu'au moment où il lui aura offert en échange la trame de son passé aussi halluciné qu'il puisse paraître. (92)

Fêve (re)acquires a name and a home, learns a new language and procures a job. Even though he is refused Canadian citizenship and returned to his homeland (that no longer exists), he will never be forgotten. Drawing on her own native tradition of storytelling and relating Fêve's story of exile, "des multicontes de l'exil" (Latif Ghattas 168), Madeleine is able to "ancrer son image" (Latif Ghattas 92) forever in Québécois reality:

> Elle le perpétuera en l'appelant, relatant son passage pour que son souvenir hante la nuit de ceux qui n'ont pas su discerner le vrai du faux. (11)

Essentially, Latif Ghattas resists the ghettoization of cultures marked by the migrant's nostagic view of the past, her/his idealization of the country or, in Madeleine's case, community of origin. By interweaving two voices of exile, Latif Ghattas posits an alternate perception of identity, one that is neither culturally nor geographically bound, but one that is always in the process of becoming. Although both Madeleine and Fêve return to their places of origin, the latter involuntarily, their encounter will have marked them forever. This is especially evident in Manitakawa's case who at the end of *Le Double conte de l'exil* is integrated into the "Conseils des Anciens" (167), but with a marked difference. Having Fêve's story inscribed in her own tale she accesses her own oral tradition in order to become the storyteller of the tales of her native heritage as well as Fêve's stories of the desert. Since the storyteller's task is one that depends on the story's constant recomposition and recreation, a process without an end, so ends Latif Ghattas's text, in italics, where it is up to the reader to choose the proper ending, "la fin qui n'en est jamais une" (Lequin, n.d., 16).

Conclusion

> Au cours de la nuit, l'univers a perdu son centre et maintenant, ce matin, il y a un nombre illimité de centres. Désormais chaque point de l'univers peut être pris pour un centre car, tout à coup, il y a beaucoup d'espace.
> - Bertold Brecht, qtd. in Nepveu, 1989

By negotiating a new literary space in their texts, *Entre les Fleuves* and *Le Double Conte de l'exil*, Nadine Ltaif and Mona Latif Ghattas offer alternate images of Québec. While Latif describes an internal exile where language becomes the root concern for the migrant individual attempting to incorporate herself into the new society, Latif concentrates more on the social and political aspects of that incorporation. However, both writers converge in the manner in which they question and challenge the standard notions of identity and origins, placing their migrant discourse in a postmodern discourse that has a clearly Canadian quality and a Québécois particularity.

This Canadian postmodern specificity is largely due to the country's distinctive social reality. Linda Hutcheon locates the Canadian postmodern in the regionalist, ex-centric fashion in which the country articulates its national identity. For this critic, Canadian history "is one of defining itself against centres" (4). In the sphere of literary production this is made evident by the distinctions made among the West Coast, Prairie, Maritime and, certainly, native and Québécois types of writing.

The articulation of Quebec's identity, however, has developed on a more centralizing axis, where language has figured prominantly in the configuration of that identity. The prime example of this would be the use of *joual*, a localized dialect/language, in many literary texts of the late 1960's and 1970's. The consequence of this type of linguistic regionalism is, of course, directly related to the political atmosphere of the time. The unifying aspects of such practices notwithstanding, some critics, like Pierre Nepveu, argue otherwise, that "la québécité [est en fait] elle-même déjà transculturelle," (1986, 27) reinforcing the postmodern emphasis on plurality and the de-centering of the subject.[31] Nepveu locates this transcultural stance of "québécité" in the centrifugal/centripetal movement, defined as the "pulsation incessante, sur la mode de la perte et des retrouvailles, de

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[31]The same perception is shared by Robert Berrouët-Oriol in his article "L'effet d'exil."

l'aller et du retour," (1986, 27) that has so far guided Quebec's literary production. For Nepveu, the experience of internal exile and the notion of wandering, the centrifugal aspects, have always been part of the Québécois psyche. These aspects of Quebec identity have become even more prominant recently as there emerge new generations of Québécois who have a first-hand experience of exile and displacement. The presence of these migrants in the Quebec social fabric serves to further underline heterogeneity in culture and identity.

The rise of the feminist movement in Quebec during the 1970's has also contributed to the redefinition of the Québécois identity. By positing the feminine experience, theoreticians and authors such as Nicole Brossard, Madeleine Gagnon and France Théoret, to name a few, have further deterritorialized the patriarchal aspect of the prevalent hegemonic discourses of Quebec. Drawing on French feminist theories of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, the Québécois feminists have redefined Quebec's gender politics and mapped out the effects of sexual difference on language and subjectivity. Moreover, compared to the rest of Canada, this French influence has had an impact in the differentiation between the Québécois and English-Canadian notion of power dynamics and literary production. In the words of Hutcheon, "[u]nlike Quebec women writers, who practice a more overtly radical subversion, those writing in English use a more disguised form of subversion, which only implicitly

questions the prevailing authority" (7).

Viewing the Québécois identity as already de-centered, the perspective offered by the recent migrant female authors seems to add another dimension of deterritorialization to the conceptualization of that identity. In spite of their linguistic and geographical displacement, the exiled subjects (Madeleine included) of *Entre les fleuves* and *Le Double Conte de l'exil* are able to situate themselves in Quebec, and particularly Montreal. This is primarily due to that city's cosmopolitanism. However, this is not to deny the significant role that language plays in the experience of migration. Both Nadine Ltaif and Mona Latif Ghattas highlight language, "la dernière frontière de l'altérité," (Robin 1989, 13) as the significant, if not the primary, concern of the transcultural experience. Already versed in French language, these authors have had linguistic access to Québécois culture that has facilitated their self-articulation. This prior linguistic knowledge renders their respective texts ideal expressions of "minor" practices, deterritorrializing the Québécois identity within the very linguistic framework in which that identity is formulated. While being able to communicate in their new surroundings, both Ltaif and Latif Ghattas wish simultaneously to identify with, and write against, the major literature of Quebec. For these authors, the deterritorialization is achieved on the level of language. The French they write undoubtedly evokes Middle Eastern influences, be they on the

level of symbols, myths, or manner of storytelling. In their desire to bring multiplicity and heterogeneity into the implied unity of their newly adopted culture, these hyphenated Québécois-Canadian authors simultaneously challenge and identify with Quebec's literary production and the province's notion of identity. In this respect, Ltaif and Latif Ghattas confirm the double movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization which is characteristic of writing against the centre. Their need to embrace Quebec culture and to reshape it reflects a deep-rooted desire on their part to keep the process of "becoming" open-ended. This emphasis away from stability and stasis marks them as embodiments of the new cultural realities of Quebec and Canada.

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